

What is The Ruling of Skipping the Fast Due To a Stomach Ulcer?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: Just a few days ago, I had stomach pain, and I couldn't digest food at all. After treatment, the issue was cured, but now, my stomach feels heavy. The doctor diagnosed it as an ulcer, for which I am currently undergoing treatment. So, can I skip the fasts of Ramadan because of this? My sister also has this ailment, and she told me that it is necessary to keep eating and drinking in this illness; otherwise, the pain increases significantly due to an empty stomach.

Answer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنَانِ الْمُلْكِ الْوَهَابِ اللَّهُمَّ هَدِّيَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Whether it be a stomach ulcer or any other ailment, this is not always a shari'ah valid reason to skip fasts. Many people who have stomach ulcers fast during Ramadan and their illness does not worsen. Therefore, if the illness is this minor, it is not an excuse to skip fasting, and the one who skips the fast will be sinful. However, if the nature of the ulcer is such that fasting would cause harm, i.e., fasting would worsen the illness, or if one has a dominant assumption that fasting would delay recovery, in this case, it is permissible to skip fasting. Upon recovery, offering Qada' of the fast will be necessary. Here, the dominant assumption means that there is a clear sign or symptom that the disease will worsen, the patient has previous experience, or he was informed by a professional Muslim doctor who is not known to be a fasiq. If a doctor of such attributes is not present, he should at least be known for his expertise in his field; don't consider a person to be an expert merely because of their numerous degrees. Even then, it is most cautious to seek the opinion of multiple doctors.

Also remember that you cannot skip the fast based on your sister's experience because shari'ah only accepts the experience of the patient themselves. It is not permissible to skip the fasts based on the words of another person, even if he is suffering from the same ailment.

Regarding the ruling of a patient keeping fasts or not, Imam Burhan-Uddin Marghinani عليه الرحمة states in al-Hidayah:

وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا فِي رَمَضَانَ فَخَافَ إِنْ صَامَ أَزْدَادَ مَرْضَهُ أَفْطَرَ وَقَضَى

(Al-Hidayah Sharah al-Bidayah, Vol. 1, p. 123, Publ. Dar Ihya' al-Turas al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon)
It is stated in Ghayah al-Surooqi Sharah al-Hidayah:

أَنْ بَعْضَ الْأَمْرَاضَ يَنْفَعُهُ الصَّوْمُ وَالْبَعْضُ يَضُرُّهُ وَلَيْسَ كُلُّ الْأَمْرَاضَ تَضُرُّ الصَّائِمَ فَلَمْ يَصْلَحْ نَفْسُ الْمَرْضَ إِنْ يَجْعَلْ ضَابِطًا وَالسَّفَرُ الطَّوِيلُ
مَظْنَةً الْمَشْقَةُ وَالْحَرْجُ فَادِيرُ الْحُكْمِ عَلَيْهِ— وَفِي الدِّخِيرَةِ: الْمَرْضُ الَّذِي يَبْيَحُ الْفَطْرَ: مَا يَخَافُ مِنْهُ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَرَادُ الْمَرْضُ وَمِثْلُهُ فِي مَحْتَصَرِ الْأَبْيَانِ
حسن الكرخي

(Ghayah al-Surooqi Sharah al-Hidayah, Vol. 7, p. 414, Publ. Maktabah al-Imam al-Zahabi Lil-Nashr wal-Tawzee')

Imam Ibn Hummam عليه الرحمة writes in Fath al-Qadeer:

أن قوله تعالى {فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعَذْتَ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخْرَ} يبيح الفطر لكل مريض، لكن القطع بأن شرعية الفطر له إنما هو لدفع الحرج، وتحقق الحرج من وسط بزيادة المرض أو إبطاء البرء أو فساد عضو، ثم معرفة ذلك باجتهاد المريض، والاجتهاد غير مجرد الوهم، بل هو غلبة الظن عن ألمارة أو تجربة أو بأخبار طبيب مسلم غير ظاهر الفسق

(Fath al-Qadeer, Vol. 2, p. 350, Publ. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut)

Our Master, A'la Hazrat, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمة الله تعالى عليه Fatawa Razawiyah:

جو شخص روزہ نو در کھ سکتا ہو اور ایسا مریض نہیں جس کے مرض کو روزہ مضر ہو، اس پر خود روزہ رکھنا فرض ہے اگرچہ تکلیف ہو۔

Translation: The one who can fast himself and he isn't so ill that fasting will worsen his illness, it is fard upon him to fast himself, even if it is difficult. (Fatawa Razawiyah, Vol. 10, p. 521, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

Only the experience of the patient himself is considered. It isn't permissible to skip fasting based on other's experiences. Thus, Allamah Shami عليه الرحمة wrote:

(قوله أو تجربة) ولو كانت من غير المريض عند اتحاد المرض طعن أبي السعود

(Radd al-Muhtar 'Ala al-Durr al-Mukhtar, Vol. 2, p. 422, Publ. Dar al-Fikr)

The imam of Ahl-us-Sunnah رحمة الله تعالى عليه writes in Jadd al-Mumtar regarding this:

اقول: لم يعزو أحداً في الاستناد إلى اطلاق التجربة نظر، لأن المتبادر من التجربة تجربة نفسه، ولا شك أن النفع والضرر يختلف باختلاف الامزجة مع اتحاد المرض وكذا اختلاف البقاع وكذا اختلاف الموسم إلى غير ذلك من الخصوصيات

(Jadd al-Mumtar, Vol. 4, p. 273, Publ. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, Beirut)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ حَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger ﷺ knows best.)

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